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CHAPTER I

THE SOCIAL ORGANISATION

000 In the present chapter we are to deal with the customs and institutions by which the natives of the Great Andaman regulate the conduct of persons one to another. At the outset it is necessary to get as clear an idea as possible of the structure of the Andamanese society. That structure, as will be shown, is extremely simple.

What is really of interest to the ethnologist is the social organisation of these tribes as it existed before the European occupation of the islands. The changes that have taken place in recent years have been extensive, the most important being the great diminution in numbers and the merging together of what were formerly distinct and often hostile communities. It is fairly easy, however, to discover from the natives themselves what was the constitution of the society in former times, though there remain a few points about which no satisfactory information can be obtained.

•621 [361] When the islands were first occupied by the British, before depopulation had affected their institutions, the natives of the Great Andaman were to be found living in small communities scattered over the islands, mostly on the coast, but some of them in the forest of the interior of the island. Each such community, which will be spoken of as a "local group," was independent and autonomous, leading its own life and regulating its own affairs. Each group had occasional relations with other neighbouring groups; visitors might pass from one to another; or the two groups might meet together for a few days and join in feasting and dancing. On the other hand

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On the other hand [628] 621

there were often quarrels between neighbouring groups, which might result in a state of feud between them for many months. Between communities separated from one another by a distance of only 50 miles or even less there were no direct relations whatever. The members of one community kept to their own part of the country, only leaving it to visit their friends within a narrow radius.

These local groups were united into what are here called tribes. A tribe consisted of a number of local groups all speaking what the natives themselves regard as one language, each tribe having its own language and its name. The tribe was of very little importance in regulating the social life, and was merely a loose aggregate of independent local groups. 619 197

The local groups are further distinguished by the natives themselves as being of two kinds according as they lived on the coast or inland. This division was independent of that into tribes. Some tribes consisted of coast-dwellers only, while others included both coast-dwellers and forest-dwellers. 619 616

Within the local group the only division was that into families. A family consists of a man and his wife and their unmarried children own or adopted. 594

These were the only social divisions existing among the Andamanese, who were without any of those divisions known as "clans" which are characteristic of many primitive societies.

The natives of the Great Andaman (leaving aside the *Jarawa*, who by language and culture belong to the Little Andaman division of the race) are divided into ten tribes, each occupying a certain area of country. Each tribe consists of a number of persons who speak what is regarded by the natives themselves as one language. That the tribe is fundamentally a linguistic group is shown by the tribal names. These are all formed from a stem with the prefix *aka-*, which prefix is used in the languages of the Great Andaman to convey a reference to the mouth and thereby to the function of speech. Thus in the *Aka-Jeru* language the stem *poy* means "a hole of any kind," and *aka-poy* means "the mouth," there being no other word for that part of the body. In the same language the stem *-ar-* meaning "to talk" can only be used 619 197 196

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616 184 Besides the division into tribes, and independent of it, the Andamanese recognize another division into coast-dwellers and forest-dwellers. In the *Aka-Bea* language the coast-dwellers are called *Ar-yoto*, while the forest-dwellers are called *Erem-taga*. The difference between them is due solely to the difference of their food supply. The *Ar-yoto* obtain much of their food from the sea. They are expert in fishing and turtle hunting. They make canoes and use them not only for hunting but also for travelling from one camp to another. Some portion of their food they also obtain from the forest, edible roots and fruits and the flesh of the wild pig being the chief. On the other hand the *Erem-taga* rely solely on the forest and the inland creeks for their food supply. Their only use for canoes is in the creeks. They are entirely ignorant of such matters as turtle or dugong hunting, but they are more at home than the coast-dwellers in the forest, and are generally more skilful at pig-hunting. The advantage certainly rests with the coast-dwellers, for they have both the sea and the forest to draw upon for their sustenance.

619 616 184 Some tribes consist only of coast-dwellers, such as the *Aka-Čari*, the *Akar-Bale* and perhaps the *Aka-Kọl*. On the other hand the *Aka-Bo*, although their territory includes a part of the west coast, are, by their occupations and mode of life, forest-dwellers, and the same seems to have been the case of the *Ọkọ-Jụwọi*. The *A-Pučikwar*, the *Aka-Kede*, the *Aka-Jeru* and perhaps also the *Aka-Kọra* tribes contained both coast-dwellers and forest-dwellers.

621 [421] Each tribe formerly consisted of a number of independent local groups. The local group, and not the tribe, was the land-owning group, each one owning or exercising hunting rights over a certain recognized area. At the present time, owing to the breakdown of the local organisation, through the settlement of the islands and the resulting decrease of population, it is difficult to ascertain what area of country was occupied by each of these local groups. In many cases it would seem that the boundaries between two neighbouring groups are not very clearly defined, there being portions of forest over which the members of both hunted when the

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groups were at peace[1]. There is no doubt that in the more favourable localities, particularly on the coast, the country occupied by a single group was smaller than in places of less abundant food supply. It is probable that the forest-dwelling local groups occupied considerably larger areas in each case than the coast groups. Some of the coast-dwelling groups seem to have occupied areas of less than ten square miles.

It is not easy to discover at this time exactly what number of persons would have been included in one local group. Mouat, who visited the islands in 1857–8, says of the natives, "They are rarely or never seen living alone, several of their little huts being raised in the same locality, where they dwell together in numbers varying between thirty and three hundred[2]." In another passage he states, "They are generally divided into small groups, the numbers of which vary considerably, some not containing more than ten individuals, while in others as many as two or three hundred may be found. The great majority of these groups of the natives consist on an average of from thirty to fifty men, women, and children, although sometimes as many as three hundred are found together[3]." It is probable that, if so small a party as ten were seen, they were a hunting party spending a day or a few days away from the main camp. On the other hand so large a number as three hundred could only be found together on the occasion of one of the periodical meetings of several local groups for purposes of festivity. Mouat's statement that the groups consisted on the average of from thirty to fifty persons, agrees very well with the statements of the natives themselves, and may be taken as being fairly accurate. Mr Man, writing in 1882, speaks of the Andamanese as divided into communities "each consisting of from twenty to fifty individuals," and elsewhere says that "permanent encampments vary in size and

[1] A few small areas were not occupied at all, for example the greater part of Saddle Peak in the North Andaman, which is covered with dense jungle and is supposed by the natives to be the haunt of large and deadly snakes and of evil spirits.

[2] Mouat, F. J., *Adventures and Researches among the Andaman Islanders*, London, 1863, p. 313.

[3] *Loc. cit.* p. 300.

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621 consist of several huts, which in all are rarely inhabited by more than from fifty to eighty persons[1]."

619 From the information that I was able to obtain from the natives themselves I came to the conclusion that an average
621 local group consisted of from 40 to 50 persons of all ages, the average number of local groups to a tribe being about 10. This would give the average extent of country occupied by each local group as about 16 square miles, but some groups certainly had a larger territory than this and some had smaller.

Mr M. V. Portman speaks of the tribes of the southern part of the Great Andaman as being divided into what he calls "septs," but he does not explain what he means by that term. He states that the *Aka-Bea* were divided into seven septs, the *A-Pučikwar* into four, the *Akar-Bale* into two, while the *Aka-Kol* and *Oko-Juwoi* had no real subdivisions[2]. Whatever Mr Portman may have meant by the term sept, it is clear that he did not use it to denote what is here called a local group, but some larger subdivision of the tribe. What these septs seem to have been are groups consisting each of four or five local groups having friendly relations with one another and meeting together occasionally at the festival gatherings to be described later in the present chapter.

621 There were, strictly speaking, no distinctive names for the local groups. A local group might be denoted by a reference to the district that it occupied or to one of its chief camping places. Thus, in the *Akar-Bale* tribe, those occupying the island of *Teb-juru* were spoken of as *Teb-juru-wa*, the word *wa* meaning "people," and the inhabitants of the east coast of Havelock Island were similarly denoted as *Puluga-l'armugu-wa* from the name of the district that they occupied. In the tribes of the North Andaman the word equivalent to *wa* of the South is *koloko*. Some of the local groups of the *Aka-Bo* tribe were distinguished as *Teraut buliu koloko*, *Kelera buliu koloko*, *Teradikili buliu koloko* etc., from the names of the creeks (*buliu*) that they occupied. In the *Aka-Čari* tribe the local group occupying the island of *Tonmuket* and the

[1] *Journ. Anthrop. Inst.* Vol. XII, pp. 107 and 108.

[2] Portman, *Notes on the Languages of the South Andaman Group of Tribes*, p. 13.

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adjoining mainland were called *Tarotɔlo koloko*. When a man was asked to what part of the country he belonged he would generally answer by mentioning one of the chief camping places of his local group. Thus a man of the *Tarotɔlo koloko* might say that he belonged to *Laroɲuli*, this being one of the chief camps of that country. A man of the *Teraut buliu koloko* might similarly say that he belonged to the village of *Čaičue*.

A man or woman is generally regarded as belonging to the local group in the country of which he or she was born. There is nothing, however, to prevent a person from taking up his residence with any other local group if he so wishes, and if the members of that group are willing to welcome him. It would seem that there were a fair number of such cases in which a man or a woman left his or her own local group to join another. In particular, when two young people belonging to different groups got married they might fix their residence either with his or with her parents.

The local group, as stated above, was characterised as the land-owning group. A man might hunt over the country of his own group at all times, but he might not hunt over the country of another group without the permission of the members of that group. Even at the present day, when the local organisation has largely broken down, some of these hunting rights are still observed. I noticed a case in which some of the men asked and obtained permission to hunt pig in a certain part from a man who was explained to be the owner of that part of the country, being one of the few survivors of the local group to which it belonged. It would, in former times, have been an offence that might easily have led to a serious quarrel for the men of one group to hunt or fish in the country or the waters of another group without having been granted permission to do so.

Within the territory of each local group there are a number of recognized camping places. During the greater part of every year the members of the local group would be found living together at one or other of these. Some of these camping-grounds have been in use for many centuries, as is shown by

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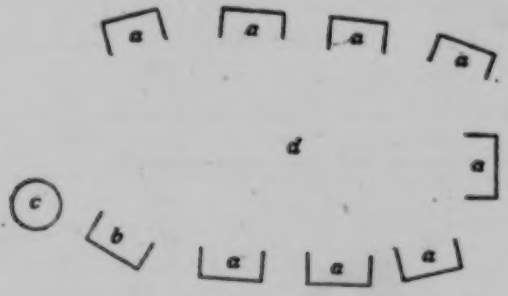
361 342 almost unknown in the Andamans. In the Archipelago there are one or two small rock shelters that are occasionally used by a hunting party away from home for a night. I was told by the natives that on one of the islands off the west coast of the North Andaman there is a rock shelter of a fair size that was formerly used as one of their chief camps.

The following figure will give an idea of the Andamanese village and its arrangement. In hunting camps which are intended only to be occupied for a few days or a few weeks, this arrangement is not observed, but the huts or shelters are placed



Plan of Andamanese Village

a. Huts of married people.
b. Bachelors' hut.
c. Public cooking place.
d. Dancing ground.

so as to give shelter from the prevailing wind with no particular regard to the respective position of the different units.

361 621 The constitution of the local group is illustrated by the arrangement of the village. The whole village consists of a number of separate huts, each hut occupied by a family. A family consists of a man and his wife and such of their children own or adopted as are not of an age to be independent. Besides the families each group necessarily contains a small number of unmarried men and widowers and some unmarried girls and widows. The unmarried men and widowers without children occupy a separate hut (or huts) which we may speak of as the bachelors' hut. Mr Man states that the spinsters (i.e., the

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unmarried women who are of marriageable age) and widows occupy a hut of their own similarly to the bachelors[1]. In the camps that I visited I did not find any such spinsters' hut. What unmarried females there were, I found attached to one or other of the families of the village, each one living in the hut of some married relative, generally the parent or foster-parent.

All the huts face inwards towards an open space which is the dancing ground of the village, and, except in exposed situations, are generally entirely open in front. At some convenient spot on one side of the dancing ground is to be found the communal cooking place of the village. This is generally close to the bachelors' hut, as it is the bachelors who attend to such cooking as is carried on there. Besides the public cooking place each family has its own fireplace in its own hut, on which a fire is kept continually alight. In the village two or more families may build their huts adjoining one another in such a way that they become for all practical purposes one hut, of which each family retains its own special portion. Two brothers will thus often make a sort of common household.

The communal hut, in the way in which it is arranged, and even in the way in which it is built, is really a village with all the huts drawn together so that each one is joined to the one next to it and the roofs meet in the middle. In the centre of the hut there is an open space corresponding to the dancing ground of the village. It is even used as a dancing ground, though for this purpose it is somewhat small. It is the public part of the hut. Around this are arranged the different families, each occupying its own special portion of the hut, which is marked off by means of short lengths of wood laid on the floor. The public cooking place is sometimes inside the hut, and there is the space marked off for the unmarried men. The advantage of the communal hut is that it affords a better protection from the weather; its disadvantage is that it leaves almost no room for dancing.

Thus it may be seen that the arrangement of the camp shows

[1] Man, *op. cit.* p. 108.

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very plainly the constitution of a local group, consisting as it does of a few families. Each group seems to have contained, on an average, about ten families, with a few unmarried males and females.

The Andaman Islanders depend for their subsistence entirely on the natural products of the sea and the forest. From the sea they obtain dugong, turtle (both green and hawksbill), an enormous variety of different sorts of fish, crustaceans (crabs, crayfish and prawns) and molluscs. Fish and crabs are also to be found in the salt-water creeks which in many places penetrate inland for some miles. From the forest they obtain the flesh of the wild pig, wild honey, and a large number of vegetable foods—roots, fruits, and seeds.

The life of the forest folk is more simple and uniform than that of the coast people and we may therefore consider it first. During the rainy season, which lasts from the middle of May to the end of September, the local group lives at its headquarters camp, which, as we have seen, formerly often took the form of a communal hut. During this season animal food is plentiful, as the jungle animals are in good condition; on the other hand there is not much vegetable food to be obtained. The following brief account will give an idea of how the day is spent in such a camp at that time of year. Some time after sunrise the camp begins to be astir. The various members of the community make a meal of any food that may have been saved from the day before. The men start off for the day's hunting. At the present time dogs are used for pig-hunting. These dogs were obtained in the first instance from the Settlement of Port Blair, and their use in pig-hunting was learnt from the Burmese convicts. Nowadays every married man has at least one dog[1]. Before the dogs were obtained, hunting was a pursuit requiring a great deal more skill than it does at present. A hunting party consists of from two to five men. Each man carries his bow and two or three pig arrows, and one of the party carries a smouldering fire-brand. They make their way through the jungle until they find the fresh tracks of a pig, or follow up some of the usual pig runs

[1] In the North Andaman the times before the Settlement are spoken of as the time when there were no dogs, *Bibi ṭaiye* = "Dog not."

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brother or to his mother's brother which he does not also owe, in perhaps a less degree, to other men of the same age, and there is no term by which he can distinguish his father's brother from those others.

If this account of the system of relationship be accurate it will be seen that the Andamanese society contrasts very strongly, in this matter, with other primitive societies[1].

It remains for us only to examine the social relations between the different local groups. Two neighbouring groups, whether of the same tribe or of different tribes, might be either friendly towards one another or unfriendly. Friendly relations were kept alive by several of the customs of the Andamanese, by the intermarriage of members of different groups, by the adoption of children from one group to another, and by the fact that a man of one group might take up his residence more or less permanently with another (particularly when he married a woman of that group, or was adopted when a boy by one of the men belonging to it). All these customs served to bind some persons in the one group to persons in the other, and thus prevent the two groups from becoming entirely unfriendly to one another.

When two neighbouring local groups were friendly to one another communication between them was kept up by visitors from one group to another, and by occasional meetings of the whole of the two groups.

Either a single person or a family might at any time pay a visit to another camp, staying a few days or weeks or even longer. A man would, however, only go visiting when he was sure of a welcome. Such visits were most frequent in the fine months of the year (December to May). As a husband and wife in many instances belonged to different local groups they

[1] It would not be safe, however, to base any arguments of importance to sociology on the above description of the Andamanese system of relationship alone. Although I tried to learn all that I could on the subject, it is quite certain that I did not learn all that was to be learnt, and it is possible that further enquiry might have shown that I was mistaken in some of my observations. The difficulty of being really sure on these matters is due (1) to the fact that the breaking-up of the old local organisation has produced many changes in their customs, and (2) to the difficulty of questioning the natives on matters connected with relationships when they have no words in their language to denote any but the simplest relationships.

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would, if living with the man's parents, pay a visit every year to the parents or other relatives of the wife. The parents of a child that had been adopted by a member of another local group would make a point of visiting the child when they could. Visitors to a camp would always take with them presents to be given to their hosts. A visitor was hospitably entertained, being given the best of the food, and joined his hosts in their hunting and fishing expeditions. The duty of hospitality is one upon which the Andamanese lay stress.

The meetings of two or more local groups were organised from time to time by the more prominent men. The time and place of the meeting would be fixed and invitations sent out to the neighbours. The visitors, men, women and children, would arrive at the appointed time, and would be accommodated as well as possible by the hosts. During the first few hours, as the natives themselves told me, everyone would feel a little shy and perhaps frightened, and it would take some time for this feeling to wear off. The visitors would bring with them various objects, such as bows, arrows, adzes, baskets, nets, red paint, white clay, and so on. These were given by the visitors to their hosts, and other presents were received in return. Although the natives themselves regarded the objects thus given as being presents, yet when a man gave a present to another he expected that he would receive something of equal value in return, and would be very angry if the return present did not come up to his expectations. A man would sometimes mention, when giving his present, that he would like some particular object in exchange, but this was the exception and not the rule, and the process cannot be spoken of as barter. In certain cases it undoubtedly served a useful economic purpose. Thus if a local group had no red ochre or white clay in their own country they could obtain these commodities by exchange with others who had. In the case of a meeting between forest and coast dwellers, the former could obtain such things as shells, red paint made with turtle fat, and other objects with which they could not provide themselves in any other way. It was in this way also that the iron obtained from a wreck on one part of the coast would be spread over a large area. For the most part, however, as

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621 574 431 437 each local group, and indeed each family, was able to provide itself with everything that it needed in the way of weapons and utensils, the exchange of presents did not serve the same purpose as trade and barter in more developed communities.

621 574 431 The purpose that it did serve was a moral one. The object of the exchange was to produce a friendly feeling between the two persons concerned, and unless it did this it failed of its purpose. It gave great scope for the exercise of tact and courtesy. No one was free to refuse a present that was offered to him. Each man and woman tried to out-do the others in generosity. There was a sort of amiable rivalry as to who could give away the greatest number of valuable presents.

574 621 527 The visitors remained with their hosts for a few days. The time was spent in hunting, feasting and dancing, and in the exchange of presents above described. The hosts made every effort to provide the camp with plenty of good things. The guests took their share in the hunting and fishing expeditions. Every evening was spent in singing and dancing. Some of the men were sure to have composed new songs for such an occasion.

574 621 628 Such meetings as these were sometimes the means of bringing to an end past quarrels between the local groups, but occasionally they were the cause of new quarrels. The hosts, or some of them, might think that they had been shabbily treated in the matter of presents, or the guests might complain that they were not well enough entertained. It often needed a man of strong influence to maintain harmony in the camp. Angry words might lead to the rapid breaking up of a meeting, and even result in a feud between the two groups.

621 628 Quarrels between individuals, as we have seen, were often taken up by friends on each side. This was particularly the case when the two opponents belonged to different local groups. Before the days of the settlement of the islands there often arose in this way petty quarrels between neighbouring local groups. In some instances there appear to have been feuds of long standing; in others there was a quarrel, a fight or two, and the enemies made peace with one another, until a fresh cause of disagreement should arise.

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It does not seem that there was ever such a thing as a stand-up fight between two parties. The whole art of fighting was to come upon your enemies by surprise, kill one or two of them and then retreat. A local group that had some grievance against another would decide to make an attack. They might seek and obtain the aid of friends from other local groups. The men who were to take part in the expedition would paint themselves and put on various ornaments and join in a dance[1]. They would then set out, either by land or by sea, in the direction of the encampment they meant to attack. Their weapons consisted of bows and arrows, and they carried no shields or other defensive weapons. They would not venture to attack the enemy's camp unless they were certain of taking it by surprise. For this reason such attacks were generally made either in the evening when the camp would be busy with the preparation of the evening meal, or at early dawn, when every one would be asleep. The attacking party would rush the camp and shoot as many men as they could. If they met with any serious resistance or lost one of their own number they would immediately retire. Those attacked, if they were really taken by surprise, were generally compelled to save themselves by flight. Though the aim of the attacking party was to kill the men, it often happened that women or children were killed. The whole fight would last only a few minutes, ending either with the retirement of the attackers before resistance, or the flight of those attacked into the jungle. A wounded enemy would be killed if found.

Such attacks and counter-attacks might be continued for some years, thus establishing a feud between two neighbouring local groups. More usually, however, after one or two such fights peace would be made. In the tribes of the North Andaman there was a special peace-making ceremony, that will be described in the next chapter. All peace negotiations were conducted through the women. One or two of the women of the one group would be sent to interview the women of the other group to see if they were willing to forget the past and make friends. It seems that it was largely the rancour of the

[1] The dance is described in the next chapter.

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women over their slain relatives that kept the feud alive, the men of the two parties being willing to make friends much more readily than the women.

An example of a long-continued feud, which, to all appearance, has been in existence for several centuries, is that between the *Aka-Bea* and the *Jarawa* of the South Andaman. The *Jarawa* have the advantage over the *Aka-Bea* that their camps are situated in the dense forest and are difficult to find, while the camps of the *Aka-Bea* are mostly along the sea-coast. At the present day the *Jarawa* take some precautions against being surprised in their camp by a hostile party. The camp is often placed on the top of a hill and the trees in the neighbourhood are cut down so that they have a good view. The paths leading to the camp are also cleared and made wider than is usual in a native path. At times it would seem that they keep sentries on the look-out.

The *Aka-Bea* and the *Jarawa* were inveterate enemies. Whenever two parties of them met by any chance, or came in the neighbourhood of one another, the larger party would attack the other. When the Settlement of Port Blair was established, friendly relations were set up with the *Aka-Bea*, and since that time the hostility of the *Jarawa* has been directed not only against the friendly Andamanese (*Aka-Bea*, etc.) but also against the inhabitants of the Settlement[1].

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Such a thing as fighting on a large scale seems to have been unknown amongst the Andamanese. In the early days of the Penal Settlement of Port Blair, the natives of the South Andaman

[1] In the years 1872 to 1901 inclusive the *Jarawa* made eight attacks on camps of the friendly Andamanese in different places, in which two of the friendly Andamanese men and one girl were killed and three men and one boy were wounded. There were also one or two casual meetings between *Jarawa* and friendly Andamanese. One of the friendlies was surprised and killed while turtle hunting in 1894. During the same years the *Jarawa* made on different occasions about twenty attacks on parties of convicts or on separate individuals, killing altogether 17 convicts and two police constables, and wounding six other convicts. In these skirmishes and in the expeditions to which they gave rise three *Jarawa* were killed and seven wounded on various occasions, and several times *Jarawa* men, women or children were captured and afterwards released. A number of convicts have at different times run away from the Settlement and as some of those were never after heard of they may be supposed to have been killed by the *Jarawa*. For an official record of dealings with the *Jarawa* see the "Census Report" 1901, pp. 68—90.

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combined in large numbers to make an attack on the Settlement, but this seems to have been an unusual course of action in order to meet what was to them an altogether unusual contingency, their territory having been invaded by a large force of foreigners. Their only fights amongst themselves seem to have been the brief and far from bloody skirmishes described above, where only a handful of warriors were engaged on each side and rarely more than one or two were killed. Of such a thing as a war in which the whole of one tribe joined to fight with another tribe I could not find any evidence in what the natives were able to tell me of their former customs.

As showing within what narrow limits the different local groups held communication with one another, it may be mentioned that till the year 1875 the *Aka-Bea* natives of Port Blair did not know of the existence of the *Aka-Kol* tribe, less than fifty miles distant, nor of any of the tribes further north. As a general rule it may be said that no man knew anything of any of the natives living more than twenty miles from his own part of the country.

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In the North Andaman, and possibly in the South also, there was a ceremony by which two hostile local groups made peace with one another. When the two groups have agreed to make friends and bring their quarrel to an end, arrangements are made for this ceremony. The arrangements are made through the women of the two parties. A day is fixed for the ceremony, which takes place in the country of the group that made the last attack. In the village of this group the dancing ground is prepared, and across it is erected what is called a *koro-čop*. Posts are put up in a line, to the tops of these is attached a length of strong cane, and from the cane are suspended bundles of shredded palm-leaf (*koro*). The appearance of this construction may be seen from the photograph reproduced in Plate XIX. The women of the camp keep a look-out for the approach of the visitors. When they are known to be near the camp, the women sit down on one side of the dancing ground, and the men take up positions in front of the decorated cane. Each man stands with his back against the *koro-čop*, with his arms stretched out sideways along the top of it. None of them has any weapons.

The visitors, who are, if we may so put it, the forgiving party, while the home party are those who have committed the last act of hostility, advance into the camp dancing, the step being that of the ordinary dance. The women of the home party mark the time of the dance by clapping their hands on their thighs. I was told that the visitors carry their weapons with them, but when the dance was performed at my request the dancers were without weapons. The visitors dance forward in front of the men standing at the *koro-čop*, and then, still dancing all the time, pass backwards and forwards between the standing men, bending their heads as they pass beneath the suspended cane. The dancers make threatening gestures at the men standing at the *koro-čop*, and every now and then break into a shrill shout. The men at the *koro* stand silent and motionless, and are expected to show no sign of fear.

After they have been dancing thus for a little time, the leader of the dancers approaches the man at one end of the *koro* and, taking him by the shoulders from the front, leaps vigorously

1: Radcliffe-Brown E-5 (1906-1908)1922
AZ2 Andamans AZ2

621 535 728 up and down to the time of the dance, thus giving the man he holds a good shaking. The leader then passes on to the next man in the row while another of the dancers goes through the same performance with the first man. This is continued until each of the dancers has "shaken" each of the standing men. The dancers then pass under the *koro* and shake their enemies in the same manner from the back. After a little more dancing the dancers retire, and the women of the visiting group come forward and dance in much the same way that the men have done, each woman giving each of the men of the other group a good shaking.

When the women have been through their dance the two parties of men and women sit down and weep together.

[431] The two groups remain camped together for a few days, spending the time in hunting and dancing together. Presents are exchanged, as at the ordinary meetings of different groups. The men of the two groups exchange bows with one another.

1: Radcliffe-Brown E-5 (1906-1908)1922
AZ2 Andamans AZ2

to intensify the collective anger against the hostile group, and thereby and in other ways to produce a state of excitement and elation which has an important influence on the fighting quality of the Andaman warrior.

An important feature of the social life of the Andamans in former times was the dance-meetings that were regularly held and at which two or more local groups met together for a few days. Each local group lived for the greater part of the year comparatively isolated from others. What little solidarity there was between neighbouring groups therefore tended to become weakened. Social relations between two groups were for the most part only kept up by visits of individuals from one group to another, but such visits did not constitute a relation between group and group. The function of the dance-meetings was therefore to bring the two groups into contact and renew the social relations between them and in that way to maintain the solidarity between them. Those meetings, apart from the provision of the necessary food, were entirely devoted to the exchange of presents and to dancing, the two or more parties of men and women joining together every night in a dance. We have already seen that the exchange of presents is a means of expressing solidarity or mutual good-will. It is now clear that the dance serves to unite the two or more groups into one body, and to make that unity felt by every individual, so creating for a few days a condition of close solidarity. The effects of the meeting would gradually wear out as months went by, and therefore it was necessary to repeat the meeting at suitable intervals.

Thus it appears that not only the ordinary dance, but also the war-dance, and the dance-meetings owe their place in the life of the Andaman Islanders to the fact that dancing is a means of uniting individuals into a harmonious whole and at the same time making them actually and intensely experience their relation to that unity of which they are the members. The special dances at initiation ceremonies and on other occasions will be dealt with later in the chapter, on the basis of the general explanation given above.

On the occasion of a dance, particularly if it be a dance of

in other savages. At Government House, Calcutta, in 1895, when a party was told to sit down and weep to show the custom at meetings, in a few moments the weeping became genuine, and when after a short time they were told to stop and get up, tears were streaming down their faces. 576

General Capacities.—The Andamanese are good climbers, and rapid walkers and runners, moving with a free and independent gait, and can travel considerable distances at a time. The Jarawas turn their toes in, due to the necessity of stooping to pass along their paths through the tangled jungle. The Eremtaga are good but not remarkable trackers. The Aryoto are good swimmers and are much at home in the water. The Andamanese generally show a dexterity in getting about their thick and tangled jungles which baffles all immigrants, though in this respect the Eremtaga quite out-distance the Aryoto, and the Jarawas apparently all the others. In the jungles all shooting with arrows is necessarily at very short distance, and generally the Andamanese are good shots at short distances only, judging direction very well but distance hardly at all. They can however at the very short distance required for shooting fish allow accurately for refraction in moving water and will shoot their fish successfully even in the surf in a manner that is inimitable: this is really due to accurate judgment of direction. 481

The Andamanese are unadventurous seamen, poling and paddling their canoes with small spade paddles at considerable speed, faster than that of an ordinary ship's boat for a little distance though they could not paddle away from one in even a short chase, but they never go out of sight of land, have never been even to the Cocos (30 miles), nor to Narcondam and Barren Island, nor had they ever any knowledge of the existence of the Nicobars till our arrival. Man has a legend from Car Nicobar doubtfully going to show that the Onges from the Little Andaman once made raids on that island: but if this were true they would do so still. 502

IV. Habits and Customs.

Dwellings.—Except in the Little Andaman and among the Jarawas there are no fixed habitations, the search for easily obtained food and insanitary habits obliging the people to be nomads, for they have no practice of cultivation and domesticate no animal whatever except dogs obtained from the English. They thus dwell in various customary encampments, situate within their respective territories. At these encampments, usually fixed in sheltered spots, they erect about 14 temporary huts capable of holding up to 50 to 80 persons, arranged facing inwards on an oval plan always more or less irregular, thus— 621 [242] [231]

The central space is the dancing ground. A hut is merely a thatch about 4 feet long by 3 feet wide, sloping from 8 inches behind to 4½ feet in front, placed on four uprights and some cross-pieces without walls. In unsheltered spots and at the Head-Quarters of Septs large circular huts are built with a good deal of ingenuity, having eaves nearly touching the ground. These will be as much as 15 feet high and 30 feet in diameter. For hunting purposes mere thatched shelters are erected for protection from the wind. Close to every hut is a very small platform for surplus food about 18 inches from the ground, and in it at least one fire is carefully preserved. This is the one thing that the Andamanese are really careful about for they do not know how to make fire, though 342 [251] 372

6: Cipriani E-5 (1951-1953)1961 AZ2 Andamans AZ2
Onge

tracted hardship and considerable risk, not so much from the natives themselves as from the implacable Andaman sea. We had a terrible time during several of our landings from the open Indian Ocean. Constant danger additionally stimulated the development of research in Little Andaman. All the Indians and the Burmese behaved bravely. Among them I wish to mention here my Indian stenographer, a married man nearing thirty, from Bengal: RANBAHUR KUMAR DEY, who, on 12 and 13 February, 1953, on the south coast of the island shared two frightfully narrow escapes with me. I am sure that neither of us will ever forget it. I later found a comfortable landing place, now indicated by floating buoys, on the north coast. Two other Bengalese assistants who were a great help to me in Little Andaman and had been selected from a number of young aspirants, are PRONAB GANGULI and BIMAL CHANDRA ROY. My work in the Andamans could not have been accomplished without them and without the initiative and encouragement of officers such as Dr. B. S. GUHA, Director of the Department of Anthropology of the Indian Government, Mr. AJOY K. GHOSH, the kind, open-minded Chief Commissioner of Andamans and Nicobars during my 1951-1953 stay there, and Mr. S. N. MATHUR, who succeeded Mr. GHOSH as Chief Commissioner. In a book that I am writing I try to point out the significance of my work in the Andamans, carried out with the help of such distinguished, and sometimes heroic, Indian collaborators.

I. Hygienic Conditions

1. Habitation

The nomadic Onge have two kinds of shelter: one temporary, the other permanent, used only for short periods at a time. The Little Andaman forest is full of abandoned temporary shelters; the permanent camps are fewer, mainly situated along the coast. They consist of communal huts, strongly built by a number of families roaming under the direction of a leader. The huts have a ritual significance, as we shall presently see. Inside each communal hut are a number of beds generally equal to the number of families. Small fires are kept burning day and night near the beds, a precaution that I was thankful for on many cold nights succeeded by hot days. The Onge require nothing more against the cold. In their camps they can withstand the heaviest storms and drenching rains. In order to avoid chills it is enough for them to protect their fires from extinction. This applied to me too, while living among the Onge. The warmth and the dry air ensured good health for us all.

A few additional beds are for the use of bachelors nearing marriage. Most of the beds are marginally and radially placed; a few are placed transversally. Normal beds accommodate father, mother (the Onge are monogamous), children and dogs, all in a heap. In temporary as in permanent shelters it is customary for families to eat separately, each close to its bed. The low, round roof of the communal hut does not reach the ground; a gap of 30 cms is left free for creeping in and out at will without using the main door (a simple mat to be lifted). Rubbish is thrown carelessly everywhere, e. g. directly outside the circular hut, which is consequently surrounded by a malodorous ring of bones, imperfectly cleaned shells, bits of rotting shellfish and other animals – a rich breeding ground for flies and various other insects that rapidly destroy everything edible, leaving the grass to grow until the next lot of garbage accumulates. Building and rebuilding a communal hut always on the same

10: Sen. K-3, 4 (ca. 1955) 1962 AZ2 Andamans AZ2
Onge

The contact of the Onges with the outsiders can only be traced since the efforts of M. V. Portman[1] to establish a friendly relation with these tribes from 1886 onwards. However the earlier contacts with the Chinese and Japanese were possible because these people used to frequent the shores of Little Andaman for collecting the valuable shells and the Onges used to be engaged by them as divers and in reciprocation they were given presents of alcohol and opium. In the initial stage of the attempt for establishing a friendly relation by Portman, the Onges proved themselves hostile which was evidenced from the poor fate of the crews of a ship 'Assam Valley' when it touched the shores of Little Andaman and it was through the great efforts of the punitive expedition led by W. L. Much that the dead bodies of the crews were recovered. Later on, a few Onges, all on a sudden, arrived at Cinque Island and were captured by M. V. Portman. Only 9 of them were detained and the rest 15 were released. These few captured Onges were closely observed and studied in Port Blair by Portman and were ultimately returned back to their native land, Little Andaman. The friendly treatment and the presents that these Onges had received from Portman, paved the path of establishing friendly relations with the Onges much easier and also made the subsequent visits of the foreigners much more welcome. After Portman, a few more contacts were made with the Onges by Prof. Lapicque in March, 1893, during the operations of 1911 and 1921, undertaken by Eicsktedt, a German anthropologist, in 1827, by Dr. B. S. Guha, Ex-Director Anthropological Survey of India in 1948 and by Lidio Cipriani, an Italian anthropologist in the year 1954 and in a few succeeding years. Still the knowledge about the Onges seems to be meagre.

Living exclusively in the Little Andaman and a few of them in the Rutland Island, the Onges live in groups on a septal basis with clear-cut boundaries of hunting group for each group. There is no permanent habitation or village of the Onges in any part of the Little Andaman and their huts are of two types—(a) the permanent type of communal hut called *bera*, and (b) the temporary type of shelter called *korale*.

The abundance of food and water has made the life of the Onges comparatively easy-going. All the groups are headed by a leader and each group is assigned a fixed territory. The community life seems to be extremely democratic in character which entertains and also maintains a perfect individual freedom and only in times of necessity, advice,

1 Portman, M. V—History of one relations with the Andamanese.

10: Sen K-3, 4 (ca. 1955) 1962 AZ2 Andamans AZ2
Onge

621 622 [592] rather than order is given by the leader. Cipriani observes.[1] "For instance, it is very amusing for them to think that a man gives orders to others. This means that they have no real chiefs. A so-called Onge chief, or raja, is only the head of a group of families living in the same communal hut, and giving not orders but only advice. It is the most experienced man who is considered chief in the hut, but his authority if at all never goes beyond that hut. In other words no real chief exists in the Little Andaman. Notwithstanding this, there is a perfect order in the island, because nobody interferes with the work or encroches upon what can be considered the rights of others."

124 162 As is common to most of the aborigines, the Onges are generally not very receptive when the questions about their numbers and other groups are enquired. The headman says that there are many many fifty Onges. However the number of the Onges are approximately 600.

22 231 241 As regards the mode of living of the Onges, the hunting and collecting are the basis of their economy. The domestication of the plants i.e. art of agriculture is not known to them and it is only 30 years back, the dogs arrived in the island and have been domesticated by the Onges for chasing the pigs, their main prey. In the absence of agriculture, the natural products of the sea and the forest provide them with all [illegible] their items of diet. Animal and vegetable products and honey are the main items of their diet and there has been, so far, no introduction of salt in their diet. The most important victims of their hunting are pigs and turtles, the former is chased by dogs and are killed with great 252 cruelty. The cooking of the fish, meat, roots, tubers, jackfruits etc are 251 done by putting them under fire. Preservation of foodstuffs is not widely practised except the jackfruit seeds which are tied up in a small net inside water on the bank of some stream and taken out during rainy season, when the other vegetable foodstuffs are not available. On 146 the whole, the Onges have a very balanced diet with a fair richness of all the nutrients. In this connection the observations of Dr. Cipriani during his survey in the Little Andaman throws considerable light in [157] their conditions of life. He has estimated the Onges as one of the happiest people of the world, who in spite of their primitive economy, are not the miserable victims of poor health, ill nutrition and oddities of life.

396 Some amount of artistry and craftsmanship have developed among these people. A canoe can be constructed by a man, all by himself from

[113] 1 Cipriani, L—Survey of Little Andaman during 1954; Bul. Dept. Anth.,

11: Cipriani E-3 (1951-1955) 1966 AZ2 Andamans AZ2
Arioto

in the local language, as opposed to the people of the interior, the *Eremtaga* – appear to have numbered between six and eight thousand. Over the years their place has been taken by more than thirteen thousand foreigners, most of whom were deportees, enjoying relative liberty as servants of government officials, farmers and foresters. The settlers, voluntarily or involuntarily, introduced the islanders to alcohol and tobacco, forcing them to turn to the foreigners in order to satisfy their craving. In the famous and extremely frank work of the English explorer M. V. Portman (*A History of our Relations with the Andamanese*, Calcutta, 1899) official letters are reproduced which give precise instructions in the matter to government officials. The result of these instructions was to transform the Arioto into alcohol and tobacco addicts. Syphilis was passed to the native women by the deportees, and from them to their men. When, a few years after the mass importation of prisoners, the government authorities became aware of the infection among the Arioto, not one of them had escaped. The miserable twenty-three survivors of the eight to nine thousand of a century ago show the ultimate result only too well, and their final extinction is imminent.

Before the advent of the new civilization, the Arioto had divided up into at least ten distinct communities, but without any true tribal organization. They respected a form of chief, chosen by tacit consent for his personal qualities rather than by name or by birth-right; but the chiefs acted merely as paternal advisers, to be respected in times of trouble, with no illusions of authority. No one commanded, and none obeyed: all were content to follow the whim of the moment, with no conception of social obligation.

When the foreigners arrived, there were five main groups of Arioto on North Andaman, the Cari, Chede, Cora, Jeru and Tabo. Another five groups were in South Andaman, the Balawa, Bea, Bogig-iab, Joi and Col. With the numerical decline of the Arioto, who had always been endogamous within their group, a tendency arose for the survivors to merge and inter-marry, so that the twenty-three alive today are in fact the result of the mixing of the northern and southern Arioto, and of these with Indians and Burmese. The chief of these twenty-three individuals is Loca, a name in itself an indication of this ethnic mixture. Loca means 'whiskers', and he himself has a moustache, whereas pure Negritos have no body or facial hair.

11: Cipriani E-3 (1951-1955) 1966 AZ2 Andamans AZ2

Owing to the difficulty of pushing through the undergrowth the Onges always travel in single file, following closely behind one another, the men first, then the women and children, with the dogs following all round. They never travel alone; I hardly ever met any by themselves, but always in groups of families or groups of hunters. The man who happens to be at the front of the file is the guide and when they come to an awkward part of the journey – perhaps across a deep river – everybody helps. Trees are felled to fall across between the banks and a rope of lianas is run across to make the crossing easier for the aged, the women and the children, though their sense of balance is so good that most of them manage without it, even when carrying heavy loads across a single trunk.

The Onges are now nearly all related to each other in some way. They all know each other, and the contacts are usually friendly. The few squabbles which I saw, always over game, or food that had been gathered, all blew over very quickly; normally, especially in the dry season when every group becomes nomadic in search of food, everyone went freely all over the island. On the occasions of the great hunts, or the honey feasts, a number of groups would band together for the occasion and even then they tried to divide the spoils equally and peaceably. If a dispute does arise the camp will break up into factions, but these will still keep close to each other and after a short while their differences will be made up with the usual long and tearful embraces. These scenes of reconciliation may go on for days, all starting from nothing more serious than a difference of opinion over the division of game captured by communal effort!

Much more important than the danger of offending other human beings is that of causing offence to the spirits of the dead or the guardian spirits who provide food. There is, as I have said, not overmuch rigidity in their observations – no propitiatory offerings of any kind are made to the spirits. The supreme being, Eiuga, who takes the shape of a lizard bigger than a crocodile, they know well. On Great Andaman he becomes Puluga, equally powerful, lord of men and things but rather more anthropomorphic than his counterpart in Little Andaman. As Eiuga lives in the sky, the thunder is his voice, and the wind his breath; if he is angry he breathes out storms and throws burning tree-trunks down to the earth, setting light to the forest. Behind Eiuga are a series of minor spirits who

11: Cipriani E-3 (1951-1955) 1966 AZ2 Andamans AZ2

kitchen-middens to have been contemporaneous with the introduction of the pig, i.e. to have been introduced by outsiders. It would be possible, using radio carbon methods, to calculate this date more accurately, but on purely archaeological evidence the introduction of pottery would appear to have occurred some five thousand years ago.

8 ABSENCE OF CANNIBALISM

If we may accept the evidence of the kitchen-middens, there has never at any time been cannibalism in the Andamans, although the practice certainly existed in the later Palaeolithic era; the Andamanese must thus have been isolated in the archipelago long before the practice became widespread.

9 DRINK

The Andamanese ignorance of any drink other than water may be regarded as additional evidence of the great antiquity of their culture.

10 ABSENCE OF CLOTHING

The Jarawas of both sexes have always remained completely naked. The Onges have only in comparatively recent times adopted a form of genital covering for their womenfolk; this custom has spread as far as the north of Great Andaman, and it seems probable that the separation of the Jarawas from the Onges dates from this time.

11 ABSENCE OF TATTOOING

All primitive peoples who are habitually completely naked adorn the body in some way. The Onges have never progressed beyond the early stage of painting themselves with ochre, and do not tattoo. Their sole ornaments are small necklaces of tusk shells, strips of bark, and sometimes flowers. In all this they resemble the Tasmans (see, however, p. 143 for certain important differences), who seem to have remained in an equally early stage of cultural development.

12 TOTEMISM AND THE CLAN

Here again the complete absence of any traces appears to indicate isolation before the spread of these very ancient concepts. Neither the Onges nor the Jarawas have ever progressed beyond the stage of independent groups of families.